THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

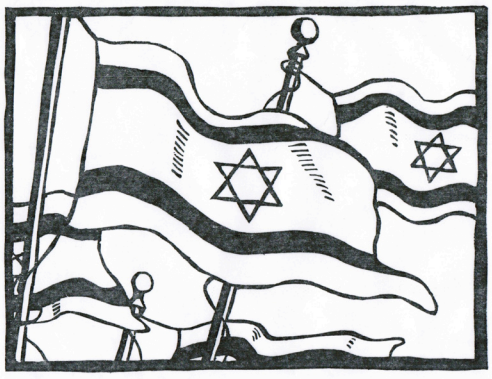
February/March 2024 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Stop Weaponizing Antisemitism

by Bernie Steinberg

From 1993 to 2010, I had the great privilege of working as Executive Director of Harvard Hillel. ...I navigated moments of tension and war: the tumultuous 1990s, as the Oslo Accords began to crumble; the Second Intifada; 9/11 and its fallout; the Iraq War; Israel's second Lebanon War and its war on Gaza in late 2008.

During my long career as a Jewish educator and leader — including thirteen years living in Jerusalem — I have seen and lived through my community's struggles. Now, as an elder leader, with the benefit of hindsight, I feel compelled to speak to what I see as a disturbing trend gripping our campus, and many others: the cynical weaponization of antisemitism by powerful forces who seek to intimidate and ultimately silence legitimate criticism of Israel and of American policy on Israel.



Lars and Lois Hokanson

In most cases, it takes the form of bullying pro-Palestine organizers. In others, these campaigns persecute anyone who simply doesn't show due deference to the bullies.

The recent effort to smear our new university president, Claudine Gay, is a case in point. I applaud the decision by the Harvard Corporation to stand by Dr. Gay amid the ludicrous charges that she somehow supports genocide against Jews, and I hope Harvard will continue to take a clear and strong stance against any further efforts by these powerful parties to meddle in university affairs, especially over personnel decisions.

The toppling of the president of the University of Pennsylvania is a sobering example of what can happen when we empower these unscrupulous forces to dictate our path as university leaders. The stakes are as high as they've ever been. Our vigilance must be up to the task.

As a leader in the Jewish community, I am particularly alarmed by today's McCarthyist tactic of manufacturing an antisemitism scare, which, in effect, turns the very real issue of Jewish safety into a pawn in a cynical political game to cover for Israel's deeply unpopular policies with regard to Palestine. (A recent poll found that 66% of all US voters and 80% of Democratic voters desire an end to Israel's current war, for instance.)

What makes this trend particularly disturbing is the power differential: Billionaire donors and the politically-connected, non-Jews and Jews alike on one side, targeting disproportionately people of vulnerable populations on the other, including students, untenured faculty, persons of color, Muslims, and, especially, Palestinian activists.

Let me speak directly to Jewish students at Harvard.

I know that it's alienating and hurtful to so many of you when campus Jewish

(Continued on Page 2)

Horror in Israel-Palestine

by Peter Beinart

Editor's Note: The author of this January 8th presentation is a widely published, Jewish professor of political science at City University in New York.

It is important to understand that the people in Gaza have represented a threat to Israel, long before Hamas was created in 1987 because most Gazans are from Israel. 70-80% of people in Gaza are families of refugees that were expelled or fled in fear during Israel's War of Independence.... Their desire to return has been a fundamental threat to Israel's identity as a Jewish state since the moment they were expelled behind Egyptian lines to this territory which became the Gaza Strip.... Israel was created to be a state in which Jews have supremacy.... Israel is constructed in large measure on the ruins of Palestinian towns and villages that were destroyed in 1948.

Of course there are Palestinian refugees also in the West Bank and other countries, but Gaza has a particularly large concentration of refugees crammed into a very small are.... So the prospect of a lot of Palestinians from Gaza going back to the place they were from threatens to undo the very basis of the Jewish state.... It is why, even when the people in Gaza have resisted in less violent ways, for instance during the 2018 Great March of return, which was not entirely but largely nonviolent with people literally walking to the fence which separates Gaza from Israel, even though most of those people were not armed, they represented a threat

(Continued on Page 4)

Antisemitism

(Continued from Page 1)

organizations, like Hillel and Chabad, take positions that exclude your voices. To those students, I say: The Jewish tradition is much deeper than any organization. No one has a monopoly on Judaism.

Continue to learn Torah, Jewish history, and our ethical traditions. Continue to draw from these sources — your sources — to find yourself, to build community, to build your own power, and even to build your own Jewish organizations.

Be boldly critical of Israel — not despite being Jewish, but because you are. There is no tradition more central to Judaism than prophetic truth-telling, no Jewish imperative more urgent than bravely criticizing corrupt leadership, starting with our own.

As someone who spent over forty years running programs in which Jews, often young people, were under my care, the safety of Jews has always been my highest priority — and, frankly, the thing that keeps me up at night. I have myself been the victim of antisemitism, including, on more than one occasion, serious violent attack.

I know what antisemitism looks like and I do not take the issue of violence against Jews lightly. I have monitored, with vigilance, the kinds of speech that Israel-aligned parties are calling "antisemitic," and it simply does not pass the sniff test.

Let me speak plainly: It is not antisemitic to demand justice for all Palestinians living in their ancestral lands.

The activists who employ this language, and the politics of liberation, are sincere people; their cause is a legitimate and important movement dissenting against the brutal treatment of Palestinians that has been ongoing for 75 years. One can disagree with any part of what these activists say, but they must be allowed to speak safely and afforded the respect their morally serious position deserves. I have learned much by listening and carefully considering the positions of these activists.

If Israel's cause is just, let it speak eloquently in its own defense. It is very telling that some of Israel's own supporters instead go to extraordinary lengths to utterly silence the other side. Smearing one's opponents is rarely a tactic employed by those confident that justice is on their side. If Israel's case requires branding its critics antisemites, it is already conceding defeat.

Let me be clear: Antisemitism in the US is a real and dangerous phenomenon, most pressingly from the alt-right white-supremacist politics that have become alarmingly mainstream since 2016. To contend against these and other antisemitic forces with clarity and purpose, we must put aside all fabricated and weaponized charges of "antisemitism" that serve to silence criticism of Israeli policy and its sponsors in the US.

As a Jewish leader, I say: Enough. Ω

Editor's Note: Reprinted from the December, 27, 2023 Harvard Crimson *(before Harvard President Gay resigned).*

On November 11, 2023, The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported that, since the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas and subsequent Israeli invasion of Gaza, the United States had experienced a 331% increase in antisemitic incidents, "including 591 anti-Israel rallies with antisemitic rhetoric." The Intercept *says, however, that 54% of those rallies called for an end to unconditional military aid to Israel, a ceasefire, or an end to genocide in Gaza. The ADL goes so far as to call nonviolent Jewish organizations like Not In Our Name and Jewish Voice for Peace, "hate groups."*

The Man He Killed

By Thomas Hardy

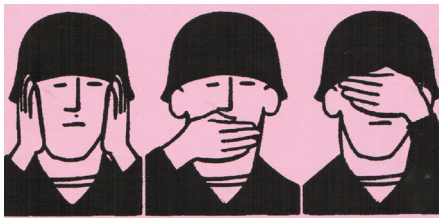
Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

I shot him dead because —
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like — just as I —
Was out of work — had sold his traps —
No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown. Ω



Barrie Maguire

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The Dangers of Dehumanization

by Hala Alyan

Editor's Note: On November 12, 2023, Hala Alyan, a Palestinian-American writer, poet, and clinical psychologist, specializing in trauma, gave these reflections on National Public Radio's Morning Edition.

After the Israeli invasion of Gaza, the first phase emotionally for myself and a lot of people I know was sort of frenetic: "O My God, people are not seeing things. We must get them to see, we must get them to understand, we must get them to humanize, we must get them to understand what is at stake if the dehumanization continues." It feels like there is a new chapter that is more grim and heart-wrenching....

We're all raised on different stories and different narratives about ourselves, about people in the world, about who is safe, who is not safe, who is worthy of protection, who is worthy of being humanized. None of us are exempt from that. And it is our responsibility to investigate the narratives we've been told.

People have seen the names written on [Palestinian] children's limbs [so their bodies can be identified after bombings]. They've seen the hospitals, the evacuated. They've seen infants left behind. Many have seen these things and deemed they're an acceptable cost.

We have to accept the fact that when I hear a member of this community say something, when I hear them start to tell their story, I feel something in me close up. I immediately feel a flare of something defensive. When that happens, and you feel that closing off, that looking away, that not wanting to witness, I would say the first thing, perhaps the most powerful thing, is just to notice that it is happening.

For me, when people who are [politically different than I am] start to tell their story, I immediately assume they are not telling the truth. We saw it with Biden when he made that statement about the number of Palestinian dead: "I have no notion that Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed," [October 25, 2023]. It was done so easily. There was no flinching in doing it. And the real problem is the dehumanization, the

really sneaky thing that dehumanization does, perhaps most damaging thing it does, is it delegitimizes the dehumanized from being able to speak on their experience. We are no longer considered legitimate sources of information. We're not considered legitimate sources even of our dead or our suffering. It puts people in a position where they are effectively being silenced without having to do the more direct efforts of silencing.

The dehumanization of my people isn't a zero sum thing. It doesn't mean I want to take that humanization away from anyone. The idea that Palestinians should have equal rights, should have equal access to resources, that's something I want for everybody. And I would be wary of spaces or narratives that try to pit that desire for equality against equality elsewhere.

There is something about being reminded that a group to which you belong has been so thoroughly subjected to certain kinds of language, characterizations, and tropes that people forget they are real people, that right now people digging through rubble are real people. They are people like you and me and like anybody listening to them. They love their children, just like we love our children. They want life, just like we want life. They get thirsty. I don't get any less thirsty than somebody in Gaza. I don't get any less hungry. I don't bleed any less.

Especially when the numbers [of dead] start to balloon and become higher and higher, it starts to become a conceptual topic. The innocence of Gaza becomes a talking point or a matter of debate. That alone is heart-wrenching.

It is a constant exercise in heartbreak. It's very painful to think about how, a month ago, children gathered [in Gaza City] and spoke, in a language that is not their first language, at a press conference to beg the international community for help.

"Since October 7th, we've faced extermination, killing, bombs falling over our heads. All of this in front of the world.... Kids of Gaza run out of their hopes and wants.... We come now to shout and invite you to protect us. We want to live! We want peace!"

One of the most painful parts of this is asking the question, "Why are so many unmoved by that?" ....Ω

"When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away your ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer." Corrie Ten Boom

Israel-Palestine

(Continued from Page 1)

because they were trying to return to territories they're from....

To understand the rise of Hamas, one has to understand what has happened to other Palestinian political efforts. The PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] for a long time pursued the idea of a secular democratic Palestine, the kind of state the Palestinians believe should have been created at the end of British colonial rule. But, in 1988, the PLO, in a historic concession, said: "We're going to give up on the idea of the entire territory being one secular Palestinian state. We're going to accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem, 22% of what was British mandatory Palestine."

...The central argument that Hamas has been making since then is that Palestinians accepted Israel's legitimacy within 78% of mandatory Palestine, but did not get, as a result of that concession, a sovereign state of their own. Hamas is opposed to that concession ideologically because they reject the legitimacy of a Jewish state within any borders, but, beyond that, they also think it was a political failure because that concession did not actually lead Israel to do things like stopping settlement growth, let alone uprooting settlements in large numbers or accepting the idea that Palestinians deserve a sovereign state in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

Hamas' political success is partly the result of the fact that Israel and the United States have defeated a whole series of other forms of Palestinian political resistance to Israeli oppression, forms of resistance that I think are much more ethical than the attacks on October 7th, which included attacks on unarmed Israeli civilians. For example, in 2005, Palestinians launched the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions [BDS] campaign, a nonviolent movement speaking in the language of human rights and international law. In so doing, they were taking up the call people had been making for a long time that Palestinians should resist nonviolently. In fact, Palestinians have been resisting nonviolently for a long time in addition to also resisting violently, but it wasn't as if the Israeli or American government embraced Palestinian nonviolent resistance. On the contrary, BDS has been criminalized in the United States. In many places, if you support boycotting Israel, you can't be employed by state government. When Palestinians went to the International Criminal Court and to the United Nations, time after time, the US vetoed resolutions that would have condemned Israeli behavior. The US made sure the International Criminal Court did not investigate Israel's denial of basic human rights for Palestinians.

Palestinians in the West Bank employed what you could call a collaborationist strategy. Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas argued: "If we work with the Israeli government in the West Bank, and we show that we can be trusted to make sure that Palestinians don't commit armed attacks on Israelis, then we will win the trust of Israel, and they will allow us to have a state of our own." That strategy also failed. Abbas has not been able to stop settlement growth at all.

October 7th and Hamas' political support have to be understood in the context of the failure of a series of other Palestinian efforts at resistance against

Israeli oppression. To say that one should understand that context is not to say that I justify attacks on civilians. I don't. I'm opposed to attacks on civilians, but Israel and the United States have actually empowered Hamas by discrediting and defeating other Palestinian efforts at gaining Palestinian freedom, efforts that did not involve attacks on civilians.

Israel thought... Hamas would act as a kind of subcontractor in Gaza like the Palestinian Authority was doing in the West Bank. Hamas would control armed groups like Islamic Jihad and focus on governance inside Gaza, allowing Israel to turn its attention away from the Palestinians and focus on normalization with Arab countries like Saudi Arabia. ...

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, in different ways, live under the control of the Israeli state, but they're not citizens. They can't vote for the government whose decisions impact every aspect of their lives. Israel thought that it could manage the situation without giving Palestinians rights either in their own state or in the one state that exists between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. It felt it could manage the situation through carrots and sticks. The carrots would allow more Palestinians to go from Gaza inside Israel to work. The sticks would be, if Hamas fired rockets, Israel would bomb Gaza....

October 7th showed that management strategy is a failure. Israelis recognize that. Israelis are grasping for a new strategy now. They realize that managing Palestinians without basic rights turns out not to be a safe strategy for Israel. In the context of that strategy, you saw the October 7th attack.

What I would like Israelis and Americans to recognize is that there is no way to safely manage a group of people to whom you are denying the most fundamental human rights while inflicting tremendous violence on them. That violence sooner or later will come back and endanger you. There is no safety for Israeli Jews if there is not safety for Palestinians. There can never be safety for Palestinians if they don't have freedom.

But unfortunately, given the political currents in Israel, which are very far to the right, a drift largely due to the impunity Israel has had because of American policy, Israel has paid no political cost for electing leaders who openly support an apartheid state in perpetuity. Because Israel has moved in that direction, there aren't many Israeli Jews learning the lesson of October 7th that Israeli Jewish safety is dependant on Palestinian freedom, but Israelis are recognizing that managing [Palestinians]... is much more difficult than they thought. It is in that context that I am very frightened that many Israeli leaders are now drawing the conclusion, if you can't manage this population of people to whom you deny human rights, the only solution is to try get rid of them, or at least as many of them as you can.

And so, we've seen, since October 7th, that a whole range of Israeli

political leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have been pushing the government of Egypt to open its doors so people from Gaza will leave. It's clear to everybody that if people of Gaza leave they will not be allowed to return, just as their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents were not allowed to return when they were expelled in 1948.

So Israel has created a situation in response to the October 7th massacre in which Gaza is becoming or has become uninhabitable for human beings. 85% of people have been forced from their homes, 70% of homes damaged or destroyed, and 40% or higher of the people are at risk of famine, the potential for tremendous death from disease due to the breakdown of... public health services.

The strategy of many in the Israeli government is: "Since we won't give these people freedom and since we can't manage our oppression of them very effectively, what we need to do is try to get rid of as many of them as possible by making Gaza unlivable and by simultaneously pressuring Egypt and asking other countries to pressure Egypt to open its doors so a significant part of the population of Gaza would leave."

In the West Bank, Israel is pushing Palestinians out of Area C, the 60% of the West Bank under direct Israeli control, into smaller urban enclaves in Areas A and B, less than 10% of historic Palestine.

All of this is somewhat horrifying for me to observe. I often find myself at a loss of words. After October 7th, my grief was overwhelming for the Israeli Jews and others who were killed. My grief and fear for the hostages is still very much present for me. We have the names of all of the hostages on our refrigerator....

I can only use the word horror that my people, people who know in our bones such a deep history of expulsion, oppression, and mass murder, that resonates through so many of our family histories and communal memory, could be doing this to another group of people. In Jewish religious terms, it constitutes a desecration of God's name. Human beings are supposed to model God's love, mercy, and compassion. When we do the opposite, we desecrate the name of God. That's what's being done in Gaza today. Ω

Words in the Night

by Very Reverend Mark Korban

The corporate "don't care" health care system
doesn't care whether we live or die,
are healthy or sick,
only that the profits stay healthy.

The "throw our young women and men
to the wolves" military
sucks the life-blood out of every legitimate human need.
May we please have the crumbs
that fall off your table?
The "your votes don't count" anti-democracy nation
is passed off as the greatest to ever exist.
The mind-numbing, spirit-crushing, entertainment,
under-attainment industry
kills the fires of human wakefulness.

Christopher Santer

The clown show of incompetence is of, by, and for the corporations,
the mighty ones who prefer profit to planet,
profit to any act of gentle love
profit to survival even of their own progeny.
The farmer poet says: "The corporations rule.
May their rule be short."

Don't ask God to bless America.
Don't ask God to bless the oligarchic, despotic, apocalyptic,
rule of corporations.
Don't ask God to bless the 800 military bases
that keep the corporate rule intact
that keep the profits flowing.

S. Jude

What does God bless?

God blesses every mother loving her child.

God blesses whatever is left of the beauty of the land,
the sky and the sea.

God blesses every act of genuine love
that passes between people,
upholds people,
gives life to people,
keeps creation intact.

God bless the half chance to breathe,
to love, to live. Ω

Editor's Note: The author is a married priest in the Orthodox Church of America.

Vegetarianism and Nonviolence

by Vasu Murti

Editor's Note: Vasu Murti is a Hindu writer and activist with degrees in Physics and Applied Mathematics from the University of California.

"Compassion, in which all ethics must take root, can only attain its full breadth and depth if it embraces all living creatures and does not limit itself to humankind."

Dr. Albert Schweitzer

Historically, vegetarianism has been viewed not merely as keeping "fit" nor as fad dieting, but as central to a larger, more inclusive philosophy of nonviolence towards humans and animals alike, and often with the moral conviction that the unnecessary killing of animals not only violates religious tenets, but also brutalizes humans to the point where violence and warfare against other humans becomes inevitable....

Rev. V.A. Holmes-Gore, author of **Those We Have Not Loved**, wrote that vegetarianism is "absolutely necessary for the redemption of the planet. Indeed we cannot hope to rid the world of war, disease, and a hundred other evils until we learn to show compassion to the creatures and refrain from taking their lives for food, clothing, and pleasure."

Dick Gregory said: "Because of the civil rights movement, I decided I couldn't be thoroughly nonviolent and participate in the destruction of animals for my dinner."

U Nu, the former Prime Minister of Burma, concluded: "World peace, or any other kind of peace, depends greatly on the attitude of the mind. Vegetarianism can bring about the right mental attitude for peace.... It holds forth a better way of life, which, if practiced universally, can lead to a better, more just, and more peaceful community of nations."

Keith Akers, author of **The Lost Religion of Jesus**, writes:

"Jesus' teachings focus on nonviolence and poverty. It could hardly be otherwise for anyone who recommends loving one's enemies, and selling everything one owns and giving it to the poor. Would it not be a logical extension of the principles of nonviolence to extend those principles from humans to animals? Should we not love animals and care for them? And isn't meat a wasteful luxury item, a food for the rich? Shouldn't we be making more food available for the poor and hungry by eating plant foods?"

Frits Eichenberg

Raising animals for food, even raising animals for animal by-products like milk and eggs, means wasting valuable acreage, because the animals themselves are raised on plant food. If we eat lower on the food chain, fewer resources are required to feed everyone, which means less agricultural acreage, etc., which means fewer rodents and insects are killed when fields are ploughed for farming. Fewer plants are killed too. If you carry this argument to the logical conclusion, a vegan diet is the least violent, because it requires one-third less acreage than a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet, and twenty times less acreage than a meat-centered diet.

Animal activists are now taking note of what Quaker pacifist and vegan psychology professor Rachel McNair refers to as "movement connections" — animal activists finding common ground or forging an alliance with related causes or related movements. As early as 1975, Peter Singer wrote in **Animal Liberation**: "The environmental movement... has led people to think about our relations with other animals that seemed impossible only a decade ago. To date, environmentalists have been more concerned with wildlife and endangered species than with animals in general, but it is not too big a jump from the thought that it is wrong to treat whales as giant vessels filled with oil and blubber to the thought that it is wrong to treat animals as machines for converting grains to flesh."

Animal activists are linking animal rights to civil and women's rights. At eco-friendly VegFests (animal rights festivals), animal activists have discussed forging an alliance with the fair trade movement, which opposes child labor, sweatshops, etc. Animals are like children. It isn't too big a jump from the thought that it's wrong to purchase products involving child labor and sweatshops to the thought that it is wrong to purchase products which involve the suffering and death of animals.

Mary Rider, founding member of the Catholic Worker house in Garner, North Carolina, wrote in *Harmony: Voices for a Just Future*:

"So we teach our children to walk softly on the earth and to embrace nonviolence as the only legitimate means of conflict resolution, on both a personal and global level. We are aware of the excessive, privileged life we lead as educated, first world US citizens and the responsibilities to which our privilege calls us. We try to live simply. We eat low on the food chain. We buy nothing new.... First world consumption kills people around the world.... Pollution, environmental devastation, corrupt governments, war, sweatshops are a result of our desire to buy more at a lower price.... We believe each person has a right to live a valued and respected life free from hunger and discrimination." Ω

Letters

Dear Editors,
Like Dr. Maté, I love Israel and the Palestinians.

I cannot conjure up the same feelings for the Likud Party, PLO, Hamas, or the radically chic ideologues out of Fox News or Democracy Now.

You are right to call out the lefty progressives across faith traditions that have given a pass to violent resistance groups like the Weather Underground, Black Liberation Army, and the Puerto Rican terrorists of the FALN [Armed Forces of National Liberation].

I have no problem calling them what I think they are: domestic terrorists.

They operate out of the belief that all life is expendable in pursuit of their grand plan for the transformation of the world.

Thankfully, that's not the message of the Gospel or the Catholic Worker.

Gene Roman
New York, New York

Editor's Note: On December 22, 2023, the leader of Hamas stressed the goal of establishing an Islamic state in Palestine. As much as we empathize with Palestinian suffering under the Israeli onslaught and occupation, we believe that the Holy Land needs to be governed by a secular state which respects the rights of Muslims, Jews, and Christians. An Islamic or Christian state would be as problematic for many who call the region home as the current Jewish state is.

Dear Scott and Claire,
Thanks so much for your latest *Catholic Radical*. I was particularly touched by Gabor Maté's reflections and your us-them thoughts, Scott. The events in the last two months in the Middle East—the atrocities of October 7 and the war in Gaza—break my heart. I flip back and forth—sympathy for the Israelis, then sympathy for the Palestinians, then back again. I just finished listening to an interview with Isaac Herzog, president of Israel. He presents the perspective of Israelis in a very helpful and reasonable way about all that has happened and continues to happen. Flip-flop goes my heart. But as you suggest, Scott, I need to stop thinking about this as a binary, an us vs. them, but as an **us**, for we are all beloved by our Lord God.

John Howland, MD
Soutbridge, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: Post October 7, President Herzog advocated collective punishment of Palestinians. "[A]n entire nation" bore responsibility for that violence and Israel would fight until "we break their backbone," he said. The US has given Israel more than 10 tons of weaponry to fulfil that goal. In this context, the work of upholding "us" requires ending the war.

Thank you for *The Catholic Radical*. It's quickly becoming my favorite CW newsletter. And thanks for including the article by Gabor Maté in your latest issue. I am currently reading his book **The Myth of Normal**. His clarity and his humble honesty are enlightening to say the least.

Reba Korban
Northfield Vermont

Dear Scott,
This summer, I read **Haunted**, your Catholic Worker mystery about Black history in Worcester. I learned so much while reading your book and was often greatly saddened by the stories of injustice. On the other hand, I've never had so many laughs and felt so hopeful while reading your book, which I was not expecting!

...This morning, I decided it was time to order a new Catholic Worker mystery: **Murder on Mott Street**.

Jill Ritz
Albuequerque, New Mexico

Editor's Note: Copies of Scott's books, **Nothing Is Impossible:** ***Stories from the Life of a Catholic Worker****;* **Murder on Mott Street***;* **The Man Who Cannot Be Killed***; and* **Haunted***, can be ordered from us at 52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610.*

Scott is nearing completion on his fifth book, **Against All Odds***, a hopeful and sometimes humorous history of the successful eight-year-long campaign to close GTE's nuclear weapons plant in Westborough, Massachusetts. For more information, reach Scott at theresecw2@gmail.com.*

Catholic Worker Calendar

"Christ of the Breadline, " 1950, by Frits Eichenberg

February 13 & 27, March 12 & 26— Evening Prayer: Please come join us for silent meditation, prayer, and Taizé chant at 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 7:00 PM.

March (date to be announced) — Sing-a-Long: Please come join us as Dan Burke leads us in song. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 7:00 PM.

Every Tuesday—Vigil for Peace: Lincoln Square. Worcester 3:30-4:30 PM.

Mason Street Musings

Mason Street had a power outage last Monday around 11:30 a.m. Our house is entirely electrified, so the shutdown was significant. No lights and internet obviously, but no heat and stove as well. Like most Americans, we take our energy sources for granted. This recent deprivation provided a brief occasion of solidarity. As the house quickly got colder, Scott and I thought of displaced Palestinians in Gaza now living in tents and dealing with winter rains.

National Grid kept extending the estimated time for completion of repairs. Our electricity would return at 1:30 p.m, their first text said. Then it was 4:00 p.m. . . . 8:00 p.m. Eating dinner in the cold and dark seemed especially gloomy, so we headed to nearby Antonio's Pizza. That night, the mid-scale restaurant seemed to us a place of **immense** wealth. Here was cooked food with lights, heat, and internet access to boot! When the young waitress brought our plates of food, our guest J became emotional. "This is the first time in my life that I've ever eaten in a restaurant," she said, wiping a tear from her cheek.

Grace Sliwoski

J is 72 years old, a petite, stooped woman who walks with a cane. A native of Ecuador, she came to this country years ago to work as a domestic for a family who barely paid her. "Trafficked," Alex, the attorney, said. After J was hospitalized for an injury last August, Alex wondered if the family was physically mistreating her.

Within weeks of J's arrival, we quickly saw how years as a trafficked domestic in Worcester had circumscribed her world. She spoke no English and had only one friend in the city, the family's kind daughter whom she calls regularly. Most days, she cleaned her room, read her Bible, and shopped at the *tienda* for tropical fruits which she often shared with us. In the evening, she sat in the kitchen and watched "*Amor Prohibido*," a Turkish tele-drama dubbed in Spanish. J has a tiny life, I thought.

But let's not underestimate our diminutive friend who has a decisive stride and exudes determination as she jostles her shopping cart out the front door to venture into the day. Last month, J enrolled in English classes at the public library and is studying earnestly. Whereas supper conversations used to consist of her rapidly chatting in Spanish and me nodding as if I understood (I didn't.), now, "thank you" and "good night" confidently pepper J's talk. Tonight, she came bounding into the kitchen bearing a bowl of sweet, pink fruit none of us could name. In a time of so much of devastation, it's good to see a once battered and controlled woman making friends and finding a new way for herself.

The Hebrew Scriptures tell of the *anawim* who are the poor of every sort. They are the marginalized, the socio-economically oppressed, the undocumented ones, like J, who have no earthly power. Their lack of status evokes our pity or avoidance. But for me, J and her kind are God's teachers, revealing strengths I didn't know existed.

The power returned to Mason Street last Monday well before National Grid's 8 p.m. prediction We have heat again, thank God. Ending the horrible war in Gaza remains our daily obsession. We beg you to make it your task, as well. Stay warm, everyone. God bless. Ω

Claire

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